

**Borough of Watchung  
Planning Board Meeting Minutes  
7:30 p.m. October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

Chairwoman Schaefer called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. Salute to the flag. The Chair called for a roll call. Present at the call of the roll were:

Schaefer (present) Boyd (present) Desnoyers (absent) Ellis (absent) Haveson (present) Sopko (present) Pennett (present) Pote (present) Speeney (present) Spingler (present) D'Annunzio (present)

Also present were attorney Frank Linnus and Engineer Tom Herits.

Chairwoman Schaefer indicated there was a quorum to conduct business and stated that this meeting was being held in compliance with N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 of the Open Public Meetings Act and proper notification of this meeting had been made.

Mr. Ellis arrived at 7:35p.m.

Madame Chair made motion to approve the minutes of August 15 2017, it was moved by Mr. Haveson seconded by Mayor Pote, and the motion carried on a voice vote. Next she made a motion to waive the reading and approve the minutes of September 19, 2017, it was moved by Mr. Haveson, seconded by Mrs. Pennett and the motion carried on a voice vote.

Madame Chair read resolution PB17-R11 Seritage Growth Properties preliminary site plan into the record. She made a motion to accept, it was moved by Mr. Haveson and seconded by Mr. Speeney. After discussion it was clarified by the board attorney that the approval tonight is for a preliminary approval NOT final approval. There will be a full hearing on the final. The applicant cannot proceed with construction until or unless it has final approval with ALL conditions eliminated including the security agreement. The call of the roll was as follows: Boyd (yes) Ellis (yes) Haveson (yes) Sopko (yes) Pennett (yes) Pote (yes) Speeney (yes) Schaefer (yes).

Chairwoman Schaefer called application PB17-03 Weldon preliminary and final site plan approval for landscaping buffer along Bonnie Burn Rd. Mr. Speeney read the site committee's report into the record.

Mr. Butler said the applicant would like to widen the berm at Colorado Café. Brian Conway, 125 Mountain Pkwy, Green Brook was sworn in and accepted by the board as well as Bob Weldon. Mr. Conway provided testimony on tree inventory, species and density. He also explained slope and the idea of succession how it relates to tree growth. He provided Exhibits A-10, Watchung borough tax map and A-11 aerial photos to help with the explanation of tree succession. Exhibits A-1 through A-5 were also entered into the record. Mr. Conway explained his process of inventorying trees and the manner in which he performed inventory on the site. He gathered data on the number of trees, sizes, species distribution, condition of trees and the density. This data provided the applicant with the areas that required the most work. If when we go to plant a tree and there's a healthy and viable tree under 6" diameter breast height, we will leave the existing tree.

The buffering plan is to maintain the existing trees, existing grade and supplement when the existing trees and grade do not provide buffering. It will provide an actual, yet effective screen of the quarry and the surrounding area. The main objective is to preserve the trees wherever possible. One thousand one hundred twenty (1120) trees are proposed to be planted, 20% of those are supplemental. Eighty percent are new on the Colorado café and firehouse property. Target density is 240 trees per acre. Mr. Healey asked if the flexibility that they are looking for is on the 20% of the filling in. Yes that is correct. Madame Chair asked why certain trees were marked to be removed. Mr. Conway described the conditions of those specific trees and

explained that they are in the area of the construction of the maintenance road where re grading would occur. He erred on the side of needing to remove them, but if it can be done without removing them, they would keep them.

Mr. McNamara, attorney for Cinemark requested a continuance for application PB16-03 with no further notice to the November 21<sup>st</sup> meeting and granted the board an extension to act through December 31<sup>st</sup> 2017.

Mr. Speeney asked for a description of the access road's use. It's used by the town to get to the radio tower. Weldon does not use it. Mrs. Pennett asked for clarification on the sewer plant reference. Mr. Butler said the Colorado Café has a private sanitary sewer system. Madame Chair asked if they were going to physically remove it. It has to be decommissioned and my contact is going to make sure all the DEP regulations are complied with by the tenant, Colorado Café replied Mr. Butler. She also asked if there would be a new access road or will they be using the same one. Mr. Conway clarified, there's two different roads being considered. The 30 foot wide maintenance road (concentric to Bonnie Burn) on the quarry side, and the other one is the access road (perpendicular to Bonnie Burn) permitted in the buffer. Exhibits A-6 through A-8 were entered into the record. The exhibits depicted the areas and proposed plantings in those areas, as well as the topography and the land slopes.

Madame Chair asked Mr. Conway how the trees would be maintained, watered, and what kind of warranty. Mr. Conway described the special process he has used in the past to plant bare root trees in a native environment which needed very little follow up care. Some supplemental watering a few times a month is needed. She then asked Mr. Conway what percentage survive. He said it depends on year, heat, and growing season. Mr. Weldon added that his company is planning on doing part of the maintenance. Madame Chair asked if the trees that die will be replaced. Mr. Conway stated they are planting so many trees that even if a certain percentage die, it would not impact the planting. Chairwoman Schaefer asked how long it would take for the trees to stabilize. One growing season replied Mr. Conway. The ultimate goal is to get as close to the middle of succession as possible. Mr. Butler asked if the area will be cleaned up before planting. No, you want to keep it that way as that's the way forests work. The insects degrade the wood, it fertilizes and adds to the viability of the soil. We don't want to do anything to disturb the visual buffer that already exists. What are you going to do about the pavement at Colorado Café asked Madame Chair? All the pavement has to come out and it will be restored to a native environment. Do you have to bring in soil? Definitely. Mr. Butler said we may bring in soil, but we have a lot of soil from quarrying. Mr. Herits said the requirements are that it is okay to bring soil from inside the borough. He pointed out the contour lines at the Fragner property were perpendicular to Bonnie Burn Rd. so those are the areas you may want the berm. The board will have to weigh the benefits or detriments of putting in a berm there. After discussion, the board found that the existing substantial trees would stay and supplement with landscaping as proposed.

The area of the fire house will have a berm with trees. Forty-five trees per 10,000 square feet and seeded with native grasses which will be cut semi-annually to promote the growth of the trees. The access road trees will remain. If we assess the condition and find some places to plant new trees we will. Since we already have the access road, the best place to put the antenna is on the backside of the vegetation so we can keep as much of the buffer in front of it as possible. Madame Chair asked if there will be a 50 foot radius around it. With the access road, we are proposing a 50 foot half circle as there will be less infringement on the buffer. As long as it meets the requirements of the police department and the applicant. Mr. Speeney asked who uses the antenna. Mr. Weldon said they used it years ago, but they do not use it anymore and do not need the antenna. Mr. Herits added the borough plans on putting up a new antenna. The berm plan for the Colorado Café area is to berm on the back end and

maintain all the existing trees on the front end (Exhibit A-9). Because there are older trees there we will not disturb any of them. There is opportunity to manipulate the topography in the parking lot to enhance the buffer as well as provide a platform for the new trees. It's a reforestation project planted like a nursery.

Mr. Speeney asked what the quarry side of the maintenance road looked like. It's going to be flat and follow the contour of the topography right now. When we mine to 130 feet then there will be a 30 foot road and then the fence will start. It will be even with the topography. He then asked if there was a vertical wall 200 feet high. Yes, said Mr. Weldon and there will be benches. We do 50 foot benches and it tapers out like an upside down pyramid. The Chair opened it up to the public for questions. Jeff Wolinsky, of 12 Mareu Dr. asked why the trees behind the Fragner house were cleared and if they were part of the 762 tree inventory. Mr. Conway said those specific trees are in the quarry. Mr. Weldon added we are clearing the trees because we will be mining there in the future. We cleared trees 250 feet off of Bonnie Burn Rd. Mr. Wolinsky asked how tall the proposed fence will be along the back of the Fragner house. It's an 8 foot chain link security fence with barbed wire on top. Once it's complete you will see the fence to some degree, but there will be many trees and underbrush for screening. After discussion, a black chain link fence with slats was suggested. Ruth Wolinsky, 12 Mareu Dr. asked if her property value would be affected by this project. Madame Chair offered that she didn't think that anyone there could answer that question, but she said the quarry was there when you purchased and it will be there when you sell and beyond. You will have a certain percentage of people that will buy it regardless of the quarry. But I don't believe anyone here can answer that for you with certainty. Mr. Linnus added, it is a permitted use and that's why they are before the Planning Board. Councilman Sopko asked if fertilizing that area would speed up the process of filling in and would create a thicker buffer. Mr. Conway said that fertilizing would be universal, not just for specific areas. Ms. Wolinsky asked how long the demolition process would take. Charles Weltner, 950 Fernwood Ave. Plainfield asked if there was going to be mining at the corner of New Providence Rd. and Bonnie Burn Rd. and then expressed his concern for preserving the view. Mr. Butler the ordinance allows quarrying 30 feet from New Providence Rd. Mr. Ellis added that the interchange of Diamond Hill Rd. and Route 78 had been promised to us, but was then turned down. It *is* a beautiful road, but it's also a main access that will eventually be developed when the Route 78 interchange is completed. Mr. Weldon added that he met with Somerset County. The county asked if them if they could take out that wall so that they could put in a 4 lane road to alleviate the traffic on Bonnie Burn and New Providence Roads from Route 22 to Route 78, but the county hasn't been able to render a decision. In addition, the bridge where the pump station is located cannot be expanded to 4 lanes. Madame Chair suggested Mr. Weltner speak to the county. Tom Caruso, 365 Bonnie Burn Rd. asked if the trees are being used to screen the fence.

Meeting adjourned 10:30p.m. and the application carried to November 21<sup>st</sup> 2017.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Maryann Amiano*  
Planning Board Clerk